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HOW PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS CAN BUILD A SENSE OF BELONGING, CREATE A TRUSTING CLASSROOM COMMUNITY, AND SPARK HOPE

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Belonging. Trust. Hope. The need each of us has for these—and the capacity we have to inspire them in others—are what make us human. Belonging is a feeling of comfort and security based on the perception that one is an integral part of a community, place, organization, or institution (Asher & Weeks, 2014; Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). Central to human relationships but variously defined, trust is crucial whenever risk, uncertainty, and interdependence are at play (McKnight & Chervany, 2000). And “to hope,” Solnit (2005) reminds us, “is to give yourself to the future—and that commitment to the future is what makes the present inhabitable” (p. 4).

All three of these feelings are about the capacity to be meaningfully present and engaged. In higher education, if students and faculty feel they do not belong, if they feel distrustful, or if they feel hopeless, they cannot be present to or meaningfully engaged in learning and teaching. In the current times of heightened conflict, divisiveness and exclusion, and a growing lack of trust and hope, it is particularly important to create spaces, structures, and opportunities to restore these fundamentally human needs and capacities. The essays in this issue illustrate how partnership can nurture a sense of belonging for both faculty and student partners (Cook-Sather & Felten, 2017). Each essay offers a different angle on how partnership can foster “the trust and respect” that nurture both partners as each seeks “to self-author their lives as college student and college professor respectively” (Schlosser & Sweeney, 2015, quoted in Cook-Sather et al., forthcoming). Taken together, the essays offer glimpses of what sparks of hope can look like.

In “[**BUILDING A SENSE OF BELONGING THROUGH PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIP**](#),” Ana Colón García, Haverford College Class of 2017, describes her initial struggle as a first-year undergraduate to navigate unfamiliar educational norms, since she had not studied in an American high school and English was not her first language. Through education coursework and as a student partner in the Students as Learners and Teachers (SaLT) program at Bryn Mawr and Haverford Colleges, Ana began to develop a sense of belonging, which then extended beyond her pedagogical partnerships into her relationships with her own professors. Her reflection on her journey led her to assert: “if we all engaged in partnerships through which we reflect and discuss how teaching and learning experiences can include and value everyone, our campuses would become places of belonging.”

In “[**STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING A CLASSROOM INTO A BRAVE AND TRUSTING LEARNING COMMUNITY: A DIALOGIC APPROACH**](#),” Clara Abbott, Haverford College Class of 2018, and Laura E. Been, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Haverford College, offer a set of “takeaways” for transforming a classroom into a brave and trusting learning community.” As they explain, “the points not only serve intrinsically as tips for promoting a healthy and affirming classroom environment, but also as a model for the process of coming to these conclusions on one’s own through discussion and observation.” Illustrating the dialogic nature of their work together, their

points are presented in the form of an observation written by Clara, followed by a reflective response by Laura. In their essay, therefore, they both describe and enact partnership in the exploration and analysis of classroom practice.

In “[A PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO MANAGING THE CHALLENGE OF APATHETIC AND DISRUPTIVE STUDENTS](#),” Victoria Reyes, Assistant Professor, University of California, Riverside, and Kirsten Adams, Bryn Mawr College Class of 2016, detail how they worked together to troubleshoot several difficult situations which, if Victoria had had to manage them alone, would have been significantly more challenging for her. This essay throws into relief how the sense of belonging, trust, and hope that partnership can provide are particularly important when a faculty member faces challenges in her work with students. Victoria and Kirsten highlight both the strategies that they were able to generate together and the equally important emotional support that the partnership provided.

In “[FLIPPING THE ROLES: ANALYSIS OF A UNIVERSITY COURSE WHERE STUDENTS BECOME CO-CREATORS OF CURRICULA](#),” Graziano Cecchinato and Laura Carlotta Foschi, both of the University of Padua, Italy, describe the transformation of a university course inspired by a student voice approach and, in particular, the ways students can become co-creators of curricula through working in partnership with faculty. Graziano and Laura focus on active learning practices centered around student-generated content, which facilitate a disruption of “the traditional lesson cycle: frontal lesson, individual study, and final exam.” Both Laura and other students who experienced this different approach, while hesitant at first, shifted their thinking and embraced partnership and experienced, in Laura’s words, “the spark of hope” inspired by this different approach to teaching and learning.

In the introduction to issue 18 of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education*, “[CREATING BRAVE SPACES WITHIN AND THROUGH STUDENT-FACULTY PEDAGOGICAL PARTNERSHIPS](#)” (Cook-Sather, 2016) I wrote about how the faculty and student partners who “experienced and created brave spaces” in their partnerships “felt courageous enough to risk, explore, experiment, assert, learn, and change, knowing that they would be supported in those necessarily destabilizing and unpredictable processes.” The essays in this issue of *Teaching and Learning Together in Higher Education* extend some of the insights offered in that previous issue, focusing on building a sense of belonging, trust, and hope through being meaningfully present to and affirming of one another.

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